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FORMER GESTAPO OFFICER HAD DIRECT TIES TO CIA, ARTICLE SAYS
BY EILEEN PUTMAN

Former Gestapo officer Klaus Barbie maintained a direct relationship with the CIA while living in Bolivia, possibly hoping it would help him avoid extradition for war crimes, says the author of an article in "Family Weekly."

At the same time, Barbie was a key figure in Bolivia's flourishing cocaine industry which flooded the United States with drugs and planned to become "the world's next Fuehrer," said the article in the Sunday supplement to 364 newspapers.

Ernest Volkman, a former Newsday reporter who is writing a book on U.S. intelligence operations, said in the upcoming article that Barbie was "reporting regularly" to the CIA for 11 years while he lived in his Bolivian refuge and avoided French extradition requests.

Volkman said he did not know whether the CIA knew of Barbie's other alleged activities, but added, "It is very difficult for me to believe ... the CIA could not have known of his very direct involvement in cocaine traffic."

Volkman did not name his sources, but quoted an unidentified "former CIA official" as saying Barbie was "a perfect recruitment, all moral issues aside."

"Barbie knew a great deal about what was going on in Bolivia, maybe more than anybody," Volkman quoted the officials as saying.

Barbie volunteered to work with the CIA, reporting directly to the CIA's La Paz office, in order to "cover himself" if he needed U.S. protection from French extradition, Volkman said at a news conference Thursday.

"All the while, Barbie was providing intelligence on the Bolivian leadership to the CIA, which may or may not have been aware that he wasn't telling them everything he knew," Volkman said. "And among the more important things Barbie wasn't telling them was his plan to become the world's next Fuehrer, while at the same time controlling most of its cocaine trade."

Barbie, 69, was called the "Butcher of Lyon" for his role as Gestapo commander in that French city, where, it has been charged, he deported thousands of French Jews to Nazi concentration camps and tortured and killed French resistance fighters.

He was expelled from Bolivia last February and faces trial in France on charges of crimes against humanity. He was twice convicted and sentenced to death in absentia in the 1950s.

The CIA referred calls about Volkman's allegations to the Justice Department, which is investigating whether U.S. intelligence agents shielded Barbie after World War II or helped him flee from Europe to Bolivia, as former intelligence officers have claimed.

Allan A. Ryan Jr., who is heading the investigation as a special assistant to Attorney General William French Smith, declined to comment.

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